

**SENIORS UNITED NOW**  
**NORTH EAST EDMONTON CHAPTER MEETING**  
**LOCATION: McCLURE UNITED CHURCH, 13708 - 74 STREET,**  
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2016**  
**MINUTES SUBMITTED BY: FRANCES BURKITT**

Wayne Sorenson, co-Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m., and welcomed 33 people in attendance. There was one new attendee and that person had learned of the meetings through a notice on the bulletin board in her building.

Wayne reviewed the location of the registration desk, the washroom facilities, and the emergency response plan of how to leave the building in the event of an emergency and the muster meeting place in the parking lot. In the event of an emergency, two people volunteered to check to insure that the washrooms were empty. Diane Hamaliuk will check the ladies' washroom and George Van Horne will check the men's washroom.

Wayne introduced the new Chapter co-Chairman, Lorne Murton. Lorne has worked for the Federal Government, at remote weather stations, and on the DEW line. Lorne attended last week's SUN Board meeting to familiarize himself with the issues and he expressed his interest in contributing to the future of the Chapter.

Wayne Sorenson stopped in at the Londonderry Save-On-Foods to let them know about our organization. They donated some pastries for our meeting refreshments and Wayne gave them special recognition and thanks for doing so.

Wayne Sorenson reported on the SUN Board Meeting, held October 5, 2016. Some of the high lights discussed were as follows and Chapter chairpersons who wish to do so may share this information at their upcoming October Chapter meetings:

- Our Executive Director, Linda Osborne, has contacted Sheree Kwong See, the Government Seniors Advocate, for a meeting to discuss SUN's objectives and present our priorities.
- SUN President, Gordon Voth, contacted the Honourable Joe Ceci, Minister of Finance, on two occasions. We will continue to seek a meeting with the Minister to discuss the issue of pension cost-of-living adjustments.
- Our Sunburst publication will be mailed out sometime during October.
- The Nominating Committee Terms of Reference have been approved.
- The Succession Planning protocol will be discussed at our November Board of Directors meeting.

- Our Executive Director, Linda Osborne, is currently seeking a “Volunteer Coordinator” and that will be a paid position. If anyone is interested in that position, please let Wayne know.
- Casino. The newly CORRECTED DATE FOR THE CASINO IS FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> AND 7<sup>TH</sup> (MONDAY AND TUESDAY). All Chapters are encouraged to recruit volunteers and forward their names to the SUN office. Wayne Sorenson, Ed Hamaliuk, and Linda Osborne, are the designated Casino coordinators. Four Chapter members have stepped forward to volunteer but more are needed. Volunteers can register online by visiting the Seniors United Now homepage (<http://seniorsunitednow.com>).
- The West Edmonton Chapter will hold a meeting to discuss reorganization strategies to assist this Chapter to get up and running again.

Wayne called for a refreshment break at 1:50 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 2:05 p.m.

Today’s presentation is about the services of the CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind). Wayne Sorenson introduced our presenter, Merico Tesolin. Merico has worked at the CNIB for almost three years and has also been a CNIB client for a long time. He will share information today about CNIB’s programs and services available to Albertans. He will share basic information about the most common eye diseases within Canada. Outside of CNIB, Merico enjoys being involved with volunteer activities, especially in the Deaf/Blind community. He is currently growing his hair for donation purposes and is scheduled to make that donation this November. He enjoys travel and most recently went to Australia and New Zealand on his own for 5 weeks.

Merico presented using sign language (interpreted by his assistant, Christine), and a video, to explain his own condition, Usher Syndrome. Usher Syndrome gradually causes deafness and visual impairment. Merico was contacted by a CNIB specialist who helped him to accept his loss. Deaf/blind people have rights and should make a point of getting the help that they need.

If someone is losing their sight, or knows someone who is experiencing vision loss, they should seek help. Every 12 minutes, someone in Canada begins to lose their vision. It is important to get your sight checked annually. If there is a significant change in vision over a short period of time, it is important to be seen by a doctor right away. Seniors are four times more likely to suffer vision loss. Eating leafy green vegetables is very important to eye health, as is getting exercise. Sunglasses should be worn to prevent the sun’s UV rays from damaging your eyes.

Merico referred to common eye diseases: AMD, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma.

AMD (age-related macular degeneration) causes damage to the central part of the eye. Vision loss due to AMD can range from mild to severe. Age, family history, ethnicity, smoking, poor diet, excessive sunlight exposure and obesity are factors in causing AMD.

Cataracts develop as we age and cause the lens to harden and become cloudy. Cataracts can be removed by surgery. Causes are age, family history, diabetes, smoking, drinking alcohol, excessive sun exposure, steroid medication and/or eye injury.

People with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes can develop diabetic retinopathy. Without treatment this condition can cause permanent vision loss. Causes are uncontrolled high blood sugar, high blood pressure, smoking and ethnicity (aboriginal Canadians are especially prone to diabetes).

Glaucoma damages the optic nerve and is usually caused by high pressure inside the eye, although people with normal eye pressure can develop glaucoma. Glaucoma is painless and has no symptoms and people may not be aware they have it. Untreated, it can lead to blindness. Elevated pressure in the eye, age, family history, ethnicity, myopia, and family history are factors in developing glaucoma.

The CNIB was established in 1918. The Halifax Explosion and WWI both caused many Canadians to lose their vision. There was a need for shelter, clothing and food for many of those returning from the war with vision loss. Since then the organization has evolved to provide programs and services for those with vision loss. The CNIB advocates with the Government. It is a charity that only receives 30% of its funding from the Government. The remainder of the funding comes from individual Canadians through fund raising events and bequests. Individuals who have a need are referred to the CNIB. It is time for the Government to fully fund and take over this service. In order to help make the case for the Government to take over the services, the CNIB asks that individuals seeking the CNIB services have their eye doctor fill out a CNIB Eye Doctor Referral form. The Alberta CNIB serves 12,000 persons.

The CNIB works hard to meet the unique needs of individuals in communities across Canada. Some services vary according to region. Some of the services provided are as follows:

- Emotional and wellness support. Supporting people with vision loss who are feeling depressed, angry, or alone to help them through those feelings.
- Low vision services. If someone has experienced a partial loss of vision, the CNIB helps an individual to make the most of their remaining sight through giving them tips on how to cope and suggesting helpful devices, such as magnifiers, to assist them.
- Independent living services. CNIB specialists can work one-on-one with a person or in a group to help build the skills to live independently.

- Independent travel. The CNIB teaches techniques to learn how to do such things as navigating city streets while walking and how to ride public transit with confidence.
- The CNIB Library. The library has over 80,000 accessible materials in formats like braille and audio. Books and daily newspapers can be downloaded through the digital collection.
- Assistive technology services. Receive an assessment from a CNIB specialist to get recommendations on assistive technologies that meet your specific needs, such as audio book players, video magnifiers, computer screen readers, and many other items. Financial supports may be available for some of these items.
- Deaf/Blind services. These services are currently only offered in Ontario. Information on these services may be obtained through the Deafblind Services section of the Ontario CNIB website.
- Shop CNIB. The CNIB has many items available for sale such as white canes, magnifiers, large print playing cards, talking watches, timers, large button phones, talking calculators, etc.
- Career and employment services, as well as child and family services are also available through the CNIB.

Merico and his assistants had handouts available. They also had a display of the low vision assistance items (magnifiers, talking watches, large print address book, etc.) that can be purchased through the CNIB.

Questions and answers were discussed throughout the presentation.

Wayne Sorenson thanked Merico for his presentation and Ed Hamaliuk presented him with an honorarium of a box of chocolates. Wayne Sorenson asked Merico to do the 50/50 draw. The winner of the 50/50 draw collected \$23.00. Additional draws were made for packages of donuts and muffins donated by Save-On-Foods.

Wayne thanked everyone for coming. The next meeting will be held November 8, 2016, and the topic will be “Why is foot care important? Proper foot care will help keep you active and independent”.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.